

3/31/22 Chairman Garamendi Opening Statement

Thank you all for joining us today. Gen Van Ovost, it's good to see you again; it's been a while since we worked together at Travis.

As you know, mobility is an incredibly important subject; after all, if you can't get to or sustain the fight, you have no chance of winning. Russia is learning the lesson as we speak. Speaking of Russia, I'd like to commend TRANSCOM on their ongoing support to Ukraine, where they've conducted over 200 missions and transported over 6,500 short tons of equipment.

Let's first talk about sealift. Between the age of ships in MARAD's National Defense Reserve Fleet and the availability of US-flagged vessels that can participate in the MARAD managed Maritime Security Program Fleet, we do not have the maritime logistics force needed to fight a peer adversary. And when you look at this sealift gap in combination with the Navy's Military Sealift Command, these gaps become more apparent.

The average age of the Ready Reserve Fleet is 47-years old, the Surge Sealift Fleet is 29-years old, and the Prepositioning Fleet is 28-years. The recent Turbo Activation data demonstrates that our sealift ships are well passed their prime, and yet I do not see a concerted effort by the Department to recapitalize these ships. Congress provided authority and funding to procure four used sealift vessels, with the option to procure an additional five if the Secretary submits an

acquisition strategy for 10 new American-made vessels. Congress also authorized the use of a commercial procurement model similar to that used for the ongoing National Security Maritime Vessel program.

To date, we have seen MARAD purchase four used sealift vessels, but we have seen no plan for new vessels. So we need to know how you are going to ensure that we have the right sealift capacity and capability.

Turning to air mobility - two years ago, the previous TRANSCOM commander testified that he opposed the Air Force's plan to retire some of its legacy aerial refueling tankers, and Congress enacted minimum force structure requirements. Last year, and with concurrence from the TRANSCOM commander, we amended these force structure requirements. That said, the KC-46A is still not fully operational and I remain concerned with the Air Force's plan to retire legacy aerial refueling tankers given the KC-46 challenges. General Van Ovost, we need to understand the Air Force's Budget Request with respect to legacy aerial refueling tankers. Do you concur with this plan? Does this budget request provide you the capacity and capability that you need?

We also need to discuss the Defense Personal Property Program contract. We are aware that TRANSCOM awarded the Global Household Goods contract in November, that GAO has now rejected both protests, and that you are now on pause pending claims review by the Court of Federal Claims. I understand that you

are limited in what you can say, however, given the enormity of this contract, I am quite interested to hear how you intend to properly oversee this contract. We want to avoid another version of the Privatized Housing debacle, so I'd ask that you speak on your plan for ensuring that this contract, once implemented, will increase support to the warfighters.

Thank you again to the witnesses for appearing today. I yield back.

Suggested Questions:

1. Ms. Lessley – can you please speak to the Navy's plan to recapitalize the sealift fleet? Does the current plan mitigate the Army's force projection risk concerns that begin in 2024?
2. General Van Ovost – how do you plan to oversee the Global Household Goods contract such that it won't become another version of the Privatized Housing? What is your escape plan in the event that the prime contractor cannot meet contract performance metrics?
3. General Van Ovost – does the Air Force's aerial refueling force structure plan provide to you the needed capacity and capability? Where are we taking risk, and how are you mitigating it?
4. General Van Ovost, Ms. Lessley – what are you doing to ensure cyber

security of our transportation systems? What requirements do you have that are not being addressed by the Services?